

Honeyguide

WILDLIFE HOLIDAYS

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Green tourism and your Honeyguide wildlife holiday

What is green tourism?

The expressions 'green tourism' or 'eco-tourism' may get used by anyone with a natural history or outdoor element to a holiday. Really greening is best seen as a trend: a visit to appreciate any wildlife is a big step for a mass-market operator, but green tourism arguably can and should go further for specialist tour operators.

At its best, responsible travel has huge potential to promote an interest in wildlife, to contribute to wildlife conservation, to support local communities financially and to build international links and friendship.

But every business should be aware of its impact on the environment. Though this should apply to all companies, tour operators or others in the travel business providing holidays linked to the pleasure of the natural world should be more aware than any in the travel – or other – business of their environmental footprint. This gives an opportunity – an obligation, arguably – to make holidays as 'green' as possible.

How Honeyguide makes your holiday 'green'

Here are some ways in which Honeyguide tries to apply environmental and green tourism principles and 'green' policies in general. Feedback and further ideas are welcome.

Conservation donation

Putting something back to help look after the wildlife we enjoy has been a fundamental part of Honeyguide's way of working since the first holidays in 1991. This has been enhanced by creating the Honeyguide Wildlife Charitable Trust, through which the donation of £35 as part of the holiday price is routed. See <http://www.honeyguide.co.uk/charitabletrust.htm>

Raising ten of thousands for conservation projects is good start. Even if it isn't a great amount by UK standards, it goes a long way as the money is typically for smaller, more poorly funded bodies than their UK equivalents, often achieving a great deal working in biodiversity hotspots. We also know local conservationists are encouraged by our interest, often in circumstances where they

also get less moral support than they might if they were in the UK. Sometimes our visit and the donation can generate useful local publicity.

Carbon offsets

Honeyguide acknowledges that all holidays consume the world's limited resources to some extent. In particular, we use flights that produce carbon dioxide and therefore contribute to climate change. For flights, we include carbon offsets within the holiday price. See <http://www.honeyguide.co.uk/carboncredits.htm>

Paper, printing and stationery

- The Honeyguide brochure is printed on recycled paper (and always has been).
- Honeyguide headed paper is recycled paper (and always has been).

Honeyguide's printer for these has an environmental policy: see www.gowise.co.uk

- File copies of correspondence are printed on scrap paper.
- Jiffy bags/padded envelopes are re-used (also saves money: 'make do and mend' is also green!)

The only paper used that is not recycled is the honey-coloured paper used for itineraries and holiday information sheets. If anyone sees this as a recycled product, we'd be pleased to know.

Using local products and services

It's an important principle of green tourism to put money into the local economy. The worst-case scenario is staying in a foreign-owned hotel eating imported food.

The best case, which we follow as much as possible, is to stay in small-scale, locally owned hotels and other bases using local food. For transport, using local bus companies where practical supports local business and helps to encourage an interest in wildlife for our bus drivers.

This also applies at home. Honeyguide's printer, Gowise, is just up the road in Thorpe St Andrew. The mailing house for the brochure is close too, in Rackheath just outside Norwich. Convenient and green!

How you can help – tips for green travelling for Honeyguiders

With an all-in package, there isn't a great deal extra you can do. But there are a few things we like to encourage. For *Honeyguide*, think 'SWEET'

- **Shopping:** if buying souvenirs, locally made products help the local economy.
- **Water & waste:** bottled water is heavy on transport costs and waste disposal. In most areas we go to tap water is fine – take local advice – so you can save a little and be greener by bringing a water bottle or buying one bottle of water then topping it up from the tap.
- **Enjoy:** simply choosing Honeyguide Wildlife Holidays makes you greener than most.
- **Enthuse:** be an ambassador for nature – talk to people about why we are there. Just wearing binoculars carries a message.
- **Travelling:** please consider travelling to the airport by means other than a car – or at least car sharing where possible.

Local travel

We use vehicles powered by fossil fuels – buses and minibuses – for local transport, but sharing vehicles like this is generally considered quite green – much as the green lobby is in favour of buses. We have particular skill, we think, in producing itineraries that are varied and interesting but are reasonably compact. The first day is often on foot.

Other travel

Information on how to reach airports other than by car is included in holiday information sheets.

Collecting wildlife information

Our holidays put together make quite interesting archive of wildlife information, much of which is available to all online on the reports page of Honeyguide's website.

Office and home

- Travel to work is highly energy efficient – the office is at home!
- Electricity in the Honeyguide office/home is from RSPB Energy www.rspb.org.uk/supporting/green/energy.asp in which electricity you buy is matched with electricity generated from renewable sources.
- We have lots (23 at the last count) of low energy light bulbs.
- Many purchases, flights especially, are made with an RSPB visa card, so a proportion goes to conservation.

Chris Durdin, January 2007, updated March 2009

Appendix

Sustainable travel – according to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

See also:

www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/be-a-responsible-tourist/wildlife-environment

BEFORE YOU GO

- Think about where your money goes when booking your holiday. For example staying in locally owned accommodation will benefit local families—ask your tour operator.
- When you've finished with your holiday brochures, pass them on to a friend or recycle them.
- Plan a sustainable holiday—ask to see your tour operator's sustainable tourism policy, whether your hotel operates sustainably, and about activities you do while away. For example, can you book excursions that will contribute to the local economy and protect indigenous cultures and wildlife?
- Pack appropriately—waste disposal is a major expense in poorer countries. Recycle packaging from new clothes and toiletries before you go.
- Small gifts from home can be a great way to say thank you to your hosts—think about what might be of most use to the local community.

ON THE FLIGHT

- The amount of carbon burnt fuelling your flight will do more damage to the environment than any other aspect of your travels. Organisations like Climate Care and Carbon Neutral can help you offset your carbon emissions by investing in projects that prevent or remove an equivalent amount from the atmosphere.
- Read up on the countries you plan to visit—make sure you've got a good guidebook. The welcome will be warmer if you take an interest and speak even a few words of the local language.
- But use your guidebook as a starting point rather than as a bible—following it slavishly will close you off to new or unknown experiences or attractions.

SHOP RESPONSIBLY

- Help the local economy by buying local produce—shop at markets or local grocers and buy local crafts and products.
- Haggling can be fun, but don't be obsessed with getting the lowest price—remember how wealthy you are compared to local people in some countries.
- Don't buy products made from endangered species, hardwoods, shells, or ancient artefacts. If in doubt—please don't buy. For more information on endangered species and to report a concern, visit the WWF-UK Souvenir Alert Campaign for tourists.

RESPECT THE LOCAL CULTURE

- Respect local cultures, traditions and holy places. For example, ask permission before you photograph local people and dress appropriately at all times.
- Speaking at least a few words of the local language can make a big impression.
- Realise that the people in the country you are visiting often have different time concepts and thought patterns from your own. Remember that you're on holiday—don't expect people to be the same as back at home.
- Ask questions rather than assume you have all the answers beforehand.

- Displaying expensive jewellery or cameras, particularly in very poor communities, may distance you from the culture you've come to experience.

USE NATURAL RESOURCES SPARINGLY

- In many destinations natural resources such as water, wood and fuel are precious—local people may not have enough for their own needs. Help conserve resources in your hotel, lodge or camp by turning off (or down) heating, air conditioning, lights and the TV when not required. Let staff know if you are happy to re-use towels and bed linen rather than having them replaced daily.
- Use public transport, hire a bike or walk where possible—you'll meet local people and get to know the place better.
- Don't discard litter. Waste disposal is a major expense in poorer countries. Use biodegradable products, re-use bottles, plastic bags and other containers and take used batteries home with you.

HELP PRESERVE THE ENVIRONMENT AND WILDLIFE

- Help preserve the natural environment for others to enjoy. Please don't pick flowers and plants or collect pebbles and seashells. Coral is extremely fragile and takes decades to grow. Don't step on or remove any coral when swimming or diving.
- Don't support activities which exploit wild animals. Swimming with dolphins, watching dancing bear performances and having your photo taken with lion and tiger cubs, monkeys or snakes can condone and encourage animal cruelty. For more information on animal exploitation and to report a concern, visit the Born Free Foundation travellers alert.

Your holiday shouldn't unnecessarily disturb or damage wildlife or their habitats. When on an excursion, if you feel there is unnecessary disturbance, make a complaint to the local operator and your holiday representative

Further reading: www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk